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in ENERGY SHIFTS

Energy Shifts (6) – Going Beyond Limits To Growth (Newly Updated)

SEPTEMBER 6, 2018 - 10 COMMENTS

Energy Shifts (Part 6) – Going Beyond Limits To Growth (Updated)

**

The overall message of this essay (published in 2018) is about returning to a more spiritual way of life that is less resource intensive, due to a looming decline in the availability of fossil fuels (which most people are net yet fully aware of). See also notes at the bottom regarding revisions and updates.

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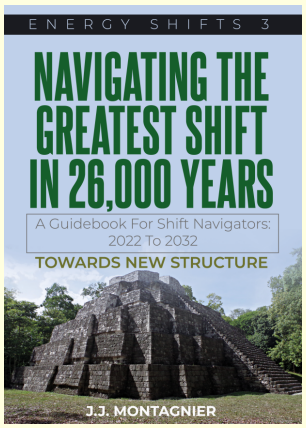

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Crossroads Crises in Perspective (Part

In this chapter, we will explore why humans are driven to such strong material growth and how we could transition to a less resource-intensive form of growth in light of potential upcoming physical resource constraints. Given that humans are naturally driven to growth, how do we canalize our will to grow appropriately and in line with the new incoming metaphysical energy of the age?

Unconstrained Material Growth

During a materialistic epoch, such as the one that we are in, it would be natural for civilizations to generally tend towards material growth because humans are to a large extent bound by the dominant cyclic energies of the ages in which they find themselves (see *Part 5).*

Most cultures would, nonetheless, under normal circumstances endeavor to preserve and promote spiritual practices that would offset materialism in order to maintain some balance.

There is usually a natural understanding among spiritual leaders in all cultures that by abandoning spirituality completely, people could 'lose their heads' in materialism – and that would be especially true in *an age of materialism*. Should that happen, sufficient internal moral codes to limit external material excesses could disappear.

Disconnected Material Growth

Material growth, accomplished with restraint and within an environmentally conscious framework, would require maintaining a connection with the natural environment, but the concept of modern progress in itself depends to a large extent on moving away from nature. Urbanization and modernization go hand-in-hand, which means that physical removal from nature is usually followed by intellectual removal from nature – and vice versa.

The Power of Modernization

Bearing physical constraints in mind would always be the wise thing to do, especially when moving away from nature; however, maintaining such an equilibrium when almost permanently isolated from nature may be easier said than done.

When societies are swept up in the heady currents of modernization, with the driving force being progress at all costs, nature and the environment recede into the background. They are only occasionally focused upon, usually temporarily, and mainly when large environmental crises hit news headlines.

The price that we would pay for living within resource constraints would be reduced material growth with limited modernization, while the price that we are paying for powerful, unconstrained modernization is a loss of perception in relation to natural resource boundaries. The more we modernize, the further we drift away from limited resource realities and the more our collective myopia grows.

Severed Connections

A loss of connection with nature results in a loss of empathy for it by not having any direct relationship with it. Indeed, the idea of having empathy for nature would in itself seem odd to many. However, watching National Geographic documentaries about the living earth, with us as part of the biosphere, doesn't suffice.

You have to live in the natural world or live very close to it, to engage with it and experience it in order to have a connection with it. When such direct and natural interactions with nature are lacking, a sense of the sacredness within nature is lost.

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Maintaining a moral approach towards the natural world and the biosphere then falls by the wayside.

When we do not know nature directly, our inclination to appreciate it, respect it and care for it is diminished, and so is the likelihood of feeling a sense of duty or responsibility towards it.

One-Sided Growth

Interacting with nature regularly puts people in a better position to have a natural empathy for it because they would understand that nature has a natural empathy for them in the sense that it provides for them. Everything that we use and consume comes from the natural world first and foremost. It is then processed and refined, but the modern mind tends to not make that connection consistently enough.

There is no doubt that incredible human progress has been made through modernization, notably in the sciences and technology. This progress has undoubtedly led to the further development of the human mind, but it has also led to a one-sided form of development due to our intellectual disconnect from nature.

An imbalance has developed, in that modern humans do not fully comprehend that they are naturally and fundamentally connected to nature at all times, and that they are an intrinsic component of nature. We are not alien to this world and neither are we aliens in it, but one-sided intellectual development away from the natural world can and does at times lead to such conclusions.

Committed to Material Growth

Our dependence on material growth for modern prosperity, welfare, safety, comforts and quality of life – things that everybody wants and aspires to – means that our capacity for prioritizing anything outside of this paradigm is greatly compromised. Even the idea of limiting material growth would, in many cases, motivate an even stronger commitment to it.

Indeed, having to let go of material growth without anything to replace it would be near-impossible for most people. Much of what they have ever known, especially in the developed world, has had to do with material growth, with a bit of spiritual growth on the side. Therefore, the idea that material growth could potentially come to an end one day would oftentimes be experienced as a looming disaster of epic proportions.

Growth of the Urban Class

Once people are modernized, they rarely voluntarily revert to the pre-modernization state. By the same token, once urbanized, people generally do not return to the land.

It can be observed in developing countries that when individuals from indigenous communities become urbanized and modernized, they tend to consider themselves as having become more advanced than their peers who had maintained their traditional lifestyles in rural areas.

This is a phenomenon that has become clearly visible in the developed world, too. City dwellers often consider themselves to be more educated, more sophisticated and more forward-thinking than rural or farm residents. This became quite evident during events that played out during and after the UK-EU 'Brexit' membership referendum in 2016 and during the USA presidential election in the same year.

It would appear that on the part of the urbanized population there tends to be a lack of understanding of what it takes to live and work close to the land and how the

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educational, technological and social requirements would be different.

Urbanized middle and upper classes, therefore, seem to develop a tendency to look down on those who had "stayed behind" in the country. There is, perhaps, a perception that rural people suffer a deficit in education and a lack of sophistication and, therefore, by implication, that they lack class. Despite such perceptions, the urban class remains fully dependent on farming communities for their food supply.

Although there are many communities worldwide with one-foot-in and one-foot-out of urban living due to spending time in the countryside with family members or commuting from the countryside to towns or cities for work, once people become fully urbanized and have never known rural life, then choosing to become a farmer becomes a rather remote possibility.

Towards Upward Mobility

There is, presently, an ongoing, worldwide trend towards urbanization [1] (although that has started to slow down since the COVID crisis in 2020). This means that there has been an ongoing trend toward more materialism through consumerism which is an embedded feature of urbanization and modern living.

When people urbanize, they get access to a variety of goods, services and forms of entertainment that they would otherwise not have access to on a consistent basis. They would also have access to modern infrastructure, amenities and technological conveniences which are lacking outside of urban areas.

There are also educational and skills-oriented opportunities available in urban areas, which rural environments simply don't provide. There is a strong correlation between urbanization and modern prosperity [3].

The Freedom to Grow

Personal growth in a material sense requires freedom. Community-oriented, traditional lifestyles don't usually provide many opportunities for fully pursuing personal interests and objectives. Modernization, however, promises to potentially deliver individual achievement and success on multiple levels.

That people would choose to modernize in order to self-realize is simply a logical conclusion of going after opportunities, in many cases pursuing new opportunities that are opening up [4]. It is, therefore, little surprise that given the innate drive of humans to progress and evolve, people would be drawn to self-realization through modernization within a materialistic paradigm.

Products Of A Modern Age

From a certain perspective, modern progress (through industrialization, mechanization and automation) would be considered 'a problem' when global population numbers grow to the extent that 'massive environmental degradation' is caused everywhere by so many people 'carelessly self-realizing'.

However, the ideal of having absolute equality in terms of having equal living standards everywhere could, ironically, lead to such an eventual scenario, because it would imply ongoing industrialization and modernization to bring the living standards of everyone worldwide up to the level of Western standards. In fact, it could be argued that consumerism has had that exact objective.

Environment And Population

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Modern environmental movements tend to give the impression that the world has already arrived at a point of no return regarding environmental degradation caused by overpopulation. The reality is that many nations are relatively underpopulated with low population densities and generally have good environmental track records, whereas the contrary is of course true too in some cases, with many variables in-between.

Alarmist messages within environmental activism with regards to overpopulation are, therefore, to a large extent counterproductive and one could speculate that it might be driven by ideologies, which could explain why nuanced analyses on the subject are rarely forthcoming.

A country-by-country assessment would have to be done in terms of population densities versus available resources with regard to local populations so that a clear understanding of the actual situation could be arrived at. It may well be that many places do not face local resource declines at all.

Modernized humans are products of their age. They are acting according to what comes naturally to them within the environments they inhabit. They are – and have been for decades – constantly encouraged to participate in consumer lifestyles, and such encouragement has been normalized within the context of the rationale of the endless economic growth-imperative.

That growth-imperative has in the first place arisen out of a highly materialistic *spirit of the age.* To blame consumers for all the ills of the world is somewhat disingenuous considering that they have been told to consume to turn over the economies of the world according to the market ideologies.

Material vs. Spiritual Growth

The close proximity that indigenous people have to nature allows them to maintain – quite naturally – an equilibrium between materialism and spirituality. Indeed, indigenous people are often more spiritual than materialistic, even within the context of a material age.

Human consciousness being predominantly materialistic in its orientation in the present age means that becoming more spiritual and less materialistic within an urban environment could have the benefit of reducing over-consumption on an individual level.

There is, however, a relatively large difference between personal development in a modernized setting compared to nature-based spirituality. Becoming more intellectually spiritual through self-development while living in a city does not necessarily result in having closer contact with nature.

One Foot In And One Foot Out

On the other hand, it is also true that many people do, indeed, manage to maintain some form of balance by getting out of cities frequently for nature-based activities. In addition, they may also maintain – to an extent – frugal and responsible environmentally conscious living practices.

These individuals would probably cope better should a need ever arise to leave urban areas and return to the land. Nevertheless, it remains unlikely that even this section of society would relocate *en masse* from urban areas of their own volition.

Individually removing oneself on a permanent basis from a city or town could be a solution and would, perhaps, be the only real way to bring about a personal transformation in terms of actively being more in harmony with the environment on an ongoing basis.

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Modernization vs. Simplification

The bottom line is that, for the time being, hardly anyone really wants to go back in time in terms of progress and, in the minds of the vast majority of people, progress means modernization, which is, of course, also true for them on a practical, material level. Modern progress is what the vast majority of people simply want.

'De-modernizing', de-growing and de-industrializing all go directly against the modern concept of progress and are completely counter-intuitive to the majority of people, regardless of resource depletion realities on the ground and ongoing environmental degradation in industrial and mining areas.

Negative Progress

Once intellectually modernized through urban living and by embracing modern technologies, there's virtually no going back. In that sense, one could say that a 'collapse' is by design because there seems to be no reverse gear built into the human psyche once it has become modernized.

A 'collapse' happens when the majority of people within a civilization are unable or unwilling to change their thinking or their behaviors when limited resource realities start knocking at the door (which seems to be happening right now).

Civilizations, therefore, in some cases progress themselves into collapse, but history tells us that it should probably be viewed as a natural process because it has happened time and again. Many civilizations seem to rise and fall similarly over time (see also; *The Cyclic Reordering of Civilizations*).

The Economic Growth Imperative

Macroeconomics is the study of the overall economic performance of a country, and the growth imperative is an underlying principle of macroeconomics that takes the view that growth is always good for an economy [4]. The reasoning behind it is that continuous economic growth – measured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – reflects better living standards for the population.

Better living standards become possible when there are more jobs and higher salaries, and that would depend on more manufacturing, more production and more service delivery. These economic activities are driven by the main objective of companies for more profits for themselves and for their shareholders (their shareholders often being employees and ordinary working people.)

Higher industrial output and more jobs result in more taxes from corporations and individuals. More taxes would mean that governments can provide better social support systems, health care services and infrastructure development and can improve overall living standards.

The growth imperative is, therefore, fundamental to modern progress, and it is usually reflected in economic policy-making worldwide as it always aims to stimulate more economic growth for the economies of all countries.

Towards More Upward Mobility

The possibility of achieving better living standards draws people from rural areas toward urban areas which results in more industrial activity. Any long-term decline in economic growth would cause a decline in living standards for just about everyone, except for those who had never had their living standards raised in the first place.

Generally speaking, once living standards rise and people enter the middle classes through upward mobility, they vote for politicians who would continue to secure their living standards. Also, voters usually wish that the politicians they vote for support policies that would provide opportunities for the further raising of their quality of life through sustained and consistent economic growth.

This means that virtually all economically active people support the economic growth imperative, whether in developing or developed nations (and that's to be expected). The more that people have their material living standards raised, the higher the demand becomes for more material growth which, in turn, exacerbates the negative impact on the environment in areas where industrialization expands.

In other words, environmental degradation cannot be escaped; it can only be managed better – and that should be the main objective. There's no point in blaming the average self-actualizing human for degrading the planet, though.

Sustainable development is an oxymoron because, in the bigger scheme of things, the economic growth imperative almost always wins out over limited resource realities and environmental concerns – and that's simply due to human nature.

The reality is that although the state of the environment is important for many people, it's not the most important factor in the lives of most people, which is why environmental campaigns tend to have limited impacts. That all said, such campaigns are often political; they are rarely purely about the environment, but environmentalism is an ideal vehicle to arrive at certain policy objectives [5].

The fact that the environment is not the most important factor in the lives of most people does not mean that humans are inherently evil; it's just that if you remove them from the natural environment through urbanization, the environment is not at the forefront of their minds – as argued at length in this essay.

Some of the more extreme voices in the environmental movements have jumped to the conclusion that humans are 'a plague on the earth', which is a problematic stance because that indicates that there's a form of nihilistic self-hatred within some sections of environmentalism and it's being projected upon the rest of the humanity.

Quite tellingly, environmentalists who tend to make such claims are usually based in nations with the highest levels of consumption *per capita*. Here too, then, there seem to be some underlying political ideologies at work that might not be related directly to the environment.

A New Ethic

Should the *spirit of the age* change organically, a new ethic could potentially be arrived at naturally, (as discussed in *Parts 3* and *5*), but that would require a shift in the metaphysical energy of the age which would result in a general shift in human thinking.

Such a shift will arrive incrementally over time – but might not arrive soon enough to avoid a partial 'collapse' of our civilization due to forms of resource depletion. However, as stated before, that should rather be considered a natural development and approached pragmatically by planning practically for a potential looming economic decline in many parts of the world.

A time will come when humans will be less materialistic in terms of their thinking and would naturally want to move away from the material growth imperative but, until such a time, everything points to the fact that it would be up to individuals to make such a shift on their own as far as that would be possible for them, both in thinking and in lifestyle.

If physical resource limits for further economic expansion set in to the extent that the majority of people are personally and directly affected, a shift in thinking would probably occur. Lifestyle changes would most likely be a result in some places due to a decline in the availability of affordable fossil fuels and other resources.

Going Beyond Limits To Growth

Although there are limits to external (material) growth, there are no limits to internal (spiritual and intellectual) growth. One thing that will never change is our will to grow. As humans, we are absolutely driven to grow. The very reason why we are here is to grow – but not only materially so, and that is where we can change our thinking. We could shift our approach from being predominantly outer-growth-oriented to being mainly inner-growth-oriented. That strategy could make the transition to living a more frugal life due to economic declines easier.

Cyclic Growth

Growth is cyclical; sometimes it is material and sometimes it's spiritual (as illustrated in *Part 5*). We are slowly entering an era of exponential spiritual growth while the window for unlimited material growth is starting to close.

Most people are so committed to material growth that they are unable to make the mental shift that is required to adjust to a new paradigm. That means that many people will most likely find it extremely hard to deal with the realities of the economic declines in the developed world when they come about.

From Circles to Spirals

Unlimited material growth is a closed circle – a self-reinforcing loop that relies on the continuous availability of external material resources, some of which we are starting to run out of temporarily (and possibly also long-term), without there being sufficient substitutes.

Spiritual growth in the form of inner self-development is an open, ascending spiral with infinite growth potential that draws on unlimited intangible resources within and which can be tapped indefinitely for internal expansion.

Making a Spiritual Shift

The whole objective of self-development and self-transformation is to grow beyond the general state of being which is the standard level of development of the times. Those who follow this path become the pioneers who traverse the valley of shadows in advance. They transcend the limits of the present paradigm early by living in the next paradigm mentally, consciously and practically, while still being in the old paradigm too at the same time.

The Inner-Growth Imperative

The inner growth imperative will, one day, become as powerful as the outer growth imperative is today. Individuals who choose this path are a minority, but they will be better positioned to pioneer and conceptualize new ways of living compared to people mentally living exclusively in a material growth paradigm.

We have to evolve into creating for ourselves more non-material comforts and pleasures. We have to create an environment that would provide peace and spiritual prosperity, notwithstanding having less material abundance. We have to formulate a new ethic that continues to allow for personal and individual freedoms and to preserve them at all costs.

This and more are achievable, but it would require forward-thinking. While we still have a little time, we need to envision the world that we would like to live in. For many, it's most likely going to be a return to a slower way of life that is less urban. Taking a positive view of this probable future and having a pragmatic approach towards it would enable us to envision solutions more clearly as we shift.

Towards A Spiritual Life

A spiritual life makes for inner resilience during difficult times. We need to spiral upwards along with the upwards-moving energy on the ascending arc of human evolution. Such a state can only be reached through personal self-development. The more people start moving in this direction, the more people there will be who can build resilient spiritual communities in anticipation of the coming changes.

By J.J. Montagnier

The writer is an independent researcher and writer. References to and excerpts from this essay may be used with direction back to the original content on this page.

Note: Some of the topics in this essay are discussed further in a new series, *Humanity at the Crossroads*.

Revisions:

1. This essay has been edited and most references to climate change have been removed due to a lack of scientific consensus on the subject and due to there being a lot of conflicting data on whether the phenomenon is mainly man-made, or mainly cyclical (note added; April 2, 2021).

2. Edits have been made to the text to clarify some points regarding the environment and overpopulation (Note added; February 2, 2022).

3. A revision of this essay has been done and the title has been changed from 'There are No Limits to Growth' to 'Going Beyond Limits to Growth'. (Note added; July 10, 2022).

4. A final update has been performed on Sepember 4, 2022.

Resources:

[1] http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_c/popups/mod13t01s009.html
[2] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS
[3] https://ourworldindata.org/economic-growth#urbanisation-and-prosperity
[4] https://www.economicshelp.org/macroeconomics/economic-growth/0
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Explorer, Philosopher, Photographer

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The Road To Caral – A Visit to Peru's Ancient Lost City

10 Comments

Debra REPLY

6 YEARS AGO

Thanks for all the thought and research that went into this. In a society of more, more, more, we totally lose sight of the value of lifestyles lived "small." Yet, the best of us comes out that way. The more we are in touch with the basic challenges of living, the more we seem to share with each other. in lak'ech, Debra

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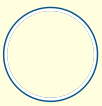

Jean-Jacques REPLY

6 YEARS AGO

Debra, thank you for your thoughts and insights. I think most of us who have been around for a while can remember a time when life was simpler and less complex. It is, perhaps, only the very recent generations, namely Y and Z that have no such memories due to all the technology they grew up with (except for those who grew up in rural areas or on farms – maybe).

The interesting thing is that the reason why we want more, more, more… has to do with the characteristics of the metaphysical energy of our age – Dwapara Yuga – the age is still young, so that is also reflected in our own immaturity.

Energetically we haven't yet progressed to being able to contain ourselves very well, so we find it hard to hold back once we get going… here are a few insights by an Ananda master on the topic:

https://www.ananda.org/ask/ignorance-in-dwapara-yuga-present-age/

I too believe that returning to a slower and simpler way of life in future blessing in disguise, and it will bring a return of "the best in us" as you will be space and time for it to flourish again – as idealistic as that may have become thoroughly corrupted over time through materialism, bu out of it metaphysically some of our deeper and higher essence will re flow back into us.

in lak'ech,
Jacques

★ Loading...

Debra REPLY

6 YEARS AGO

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Z5J83vOs04
A very interesting video by Drunvalo regarding the geomancy created by the pyramids for the purpose of establishing a vibrational spiritual grid upon which human could evolve to a higher state.

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Jean-Jacques REPLY

6 YEARS AGO

Thanks Debra! Looks very interesting – looking forward to watching it over the weekend (it looks quite long). What you said reminds of something I read, I think in 'The Book of Destiny' by Carlos Barrios, where he mentions that those who feel a calling should visit ancient sacred sites to engage with the energy in these places, and that doing that also has the effect of activating the energy at these sites. Should be fascinating to learn more on the subject.

★ Loading...

Jean-Jacques REPLY

6 YEARS AGO

PS: I think you may enjoy this Ananda seminar recently recorded about how to cope with our uncertain times and how to spiral upwards, energetically – see from 08.00 mins onward:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IzIgx0WGTAk]

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Debra REPLY

6 YEARS AGO

Thanks so much for all you shared info and replies – I'm just r
will check out the Ananda links. I was grateful for your insight
from Barrios. Knowing I will experience these places, I've alre
to imagine the scale of their presence. Thank you for defining
Sacred Exchange.

much love, in lak'ech, Debra

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Brigido Anaya REPLY

6 YEARS AGO

Magnificent work, and totally agree with your thesis, ironically just before reading your post I was reading an article of the New York Review of Books, rather than go into along explanation, I send you the link:

https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2018/09/27/green-pleasant-land-family-farm/

☺

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Jean-Jacques REPLY

6 YEARS AGO

Thank you very much for your feedback, Mr Anaya and for the excellent link you posted. The self-provisioning farm, combined with other manual work, while using little or limited energy sounds like the model we need to return to. The upside is that we already have generations behind us that lived that way, so we won't exactly need to pioneer anything new. It would just be "back to the future". Although the tricky part is of course that very few city-dwellers would know (or want to know) the first thing about farming. It may be a counter-intuitive thought, but the future lies in traditional farming, not high technology...

William Cobbett's "radical nostalgia" sounds like just the mindset we need. Hopefully people will come to realize that returning to the land could be the best possible insurance policy that they could take out.

BTW, you have one of the most informative blogs on the web. Thank you for sharing your life journeys and your knowledge.

Jean-Jacques

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My Anasa REPLY

6 YEARS AGO

It is an interesting and inspiring post! You have an awesome site. I hope you will visit my travel blog: https://my-anasa.com/
Thank you!

★ Loading...

Jean-Jacques REPLY

6 YEARS AGO

Thank you for your comment. I had a look at your blog. Nice photos of your time in Skopje!
Best wishes,
Jean-Jacques

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Over to you...

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